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L.K. Pandit

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Unseemly Provocation

The national awards, popularly known as Padma awards are in vogue for decades now. Right through the selection for the country's highest civil honour has been almost above controversy, though instances are not wanting where a nominee here or an awardee there has rejected the award. As is well-known, while distinguished services in different spheres of national activity are recognised for the Padma Sri, Padma Bhushan and Padma Vibhushan, Bharat Ratna the highest of them all, is reserved for extraordinary services to the nation. Among the recipients of this distinction are household names, all giants in the field of science, economics, politics, social service. They are all men and women of unimpeachable character, including some posthumously, though the rationale in the latter category has not gone unquestioned.

Again, while the recipients of the Padma category includes names in literature, painters, sculptors, dancers, musicians, folklore artistes et al., the rare honour of being the first among them to receive Bharat Ratna was given to the dulcet-voiced, internationally-known M.S. Subbulakshmi. That announcement was widely welcomed, without a demur from any quarters. Indeed, that by itself speaks for the high esteem in which the famed Carnatic vocalist is held all over.

There cannot be any shadow of doubt that if there is another artiste in the realm of Indian classical music who enjoys a status equal to that of our melody queen, it is Pandit Ravishankar, the widely acclaimed sitar maestro. It is in the fitness of things that an artiste from the Hindustani genre should have been thought of for Bharat Ratna—for sure, the first name for consideration was that of the Sitar wizard. The announcement was as well received as in the earlier case. Unfortunately, one senior artiste in the style didn't see eye to eye with this move. He felt there were more deserving artistes, though both the names he suggested were no more active Ravi Shankar's brother Udayshankar, the pioneer dancer and his guru Surud maestro Allauddin Khan. In which case, the list could be never-ending and perhaps it would be ages before a contemporary artiste would stand a chance! There certainly was no point in that argument.

Another argument Pandit Jasraj, one of India's highly respected vocalists put forth against Ravishankar is that he had disowned his own motherland. Well, it is well-known what the provocation for that outburst was. It was made in a fit of temper, and no significance could be attached to it. But the unkindest cut was that Jasraj should have alleged that the legendary sitarist had laboured for the award, a charge rightly ridiculed by renowned artistes of the stature of Kishori Amonkar and Lata Mangeshkar. There is no doubt that scores of other artistes would support the duo's views in the matter. For Ravi Shankar commands an enviable reputation as a gentleman artiste. He is certainly not the one to stoop to such cheap tactics.

S.N. Chandrasekhar

Japanese Dancer Makes Debut

S. Rao

Jun Ohi a Japanese scholar in religion and philosophy gave an impressive Bharathanatyam recital under the auspices of Sri Lalithakala Academy Foundation and Rotary West Club as part of International understanding project of the Academy and Rotary International through performing arts.

A student of Contemporary Dance Company, Tokyo, Japan, Jun Ohi hails from Yokohama the land of the famous Fuji Volcano. She was initiated in dance by Uma Rao, Junior Director of the Academy and the head of dance wing of the NCERT, Mysore. Uma saw the extraordinary talents in Bharathanatyam students during her month long workshop at the Contemporary Dancer Company of Tokyo. She took special interest to invite them to India to take advance lessons in Bharathanatyam under an exchange programme of the Academy.

Jun enthralled the audience in her 60-minute "Agni Pariksha". Ohi took classes in Karnatak music from Swaranalatha Nagaraj. She surprised the audience by rendering a Kannada song of Puramlara Dasa with unbelievable clarity (Ganapathy Ninage Namoni).

The other event was when she danced for a piece in Revati of the same saint. The vivid match between the lyrical meaning and the postures and facial emotions were revealing. The background ensemble by Guru Uma Rao (Nattuvangam), vocal Gayathri, Mridangam Jayachandra Rao and violin Jyothi decorated the entire concert. Ohi's portrayal for the pakavarna in Shankarabharanam "Swami Nee" on Lord Brihadeswara of Tanjavur deserves special mention. It was neat and tidy.



Jun Ohi

Sri Rama Navami

On the eve of Sri Ramanavami music festivals in the city, Sangeetha Kalabhi-vardhini Sabha one of the oldest cultural organisation established in 1952 by Mysore Vasudevacharya paid rich tributes to Sri Tyagaraja. H.T. Ramaswamy, Secretary of the Sabha is trying to rejuvenate and revive the dream of the great maestro of Mysore.

Unlike Sri Purandara Dasaru the message of Tyagaraja has stretched from Tiruvayyaru (in Tamilnadu) to Cleveland in USA.

(The latter is also termed as Tiruvayyar of USA, and the Saint's annual festival is organised on a large scale by local musicians, connoisseurs.)

Singing of "Pancharatna Kritis" is one of the main rituals of the festival all over the world. One can find all musicians get together to Chorus Tyagaraja's "Jagadumanda Karaka" (Nata), "Dudukogala" (Gula), "Sadhinchane" (Aarabhi), "Enbhro Mahanubhavanu" (Sree) and "Kanakana Kuchi" (Varali). The first one narrates the fine structural constellation of Carnatic music in its perfection, the second denotes the black spots of human life. To show the oneness of Gula "Sadhinchane" teaches you

the required mental thinking and Tyagaraja identifies the greatness of individuals in "Endara Mahambhavalu".

Culminating these stages, he has explained the bliss of realisation when Lord manifests before ones eyes. This beautiful conception of "Pancharatnas" with vocal and instrumental ensemble can give soothing effort in both ears and mind. The ensemble presented during the above performance by the cream of artistes was memorable.

Rekha Hariharath

Tradition of teaching alone cannot make an artiste unless one strives hard to accomplish the deep knowledge. Going on stage should not be done in haste. Rekha comes from the school of Vidwan R.K. Srikantan and to expert fullness of the concert is but natural. But

Rekha disappointed the art lovers with her mediocre approach except in the elaboration of "Tholi" which warmed up the performer a little.

The concert made a sober beginning with "Sarasanjana" followed by Tyagaraja's "Sri Ganapathini".

Despite popular and rare kritis the concert could not take-off to maturity. The glimpse of raga bhavas, crisp and compact swaraprastar were prefixed to almost all kritis.

The highlight of the concert, Shyamashastri's "Kamakshi-Anba" (Bhairavi) could have been more sensitive. A little more involvement could have elevated its stature.

Tholi was rendered with full confidence with "Kadhaniyari".

Kyrgyzstan Artists

A group of Artists from "Kyrgyzstan State Academic Theatre of Opera and Ballet" presented an hour-long music and dance at Kalamandira, Mysore, organised by the Indian Council for Cultural Relations in collaboration with the local Mysore Music Association.

The artistes gave in all 7 to 8 individual music and dance (some were dual programmes not the Russian Ballet as publicised). The highlight of the programme was the instrumental music by People's Actress of the USSR Samara Tektzhumova on "Tulgi" which resembles the mandolin.

The tune was typical to that of "Kashmiri and Ladak" folk music. The wonderful command of the notes and the rhythmic sense of the artistes carried the audience to a blissful meditative plane. The fingering itself was crisp and precise to the tune.

The dance items with the recorded ensemble was a feast to the eyes. A small sequence from the renowned Russian Ballet "SWAN LAKE" was fully evocative. The postures with tastefully dressed costumes showed a glimpse of western dance.

The circular, fast movements received routine applause and the agile elastic body (unlike some of our Bharathanatyam artistes) with high rhythmic sense had thrilling moments.



Ballet Group from Kyrgyzstan

Focus on Sadashiva Rao's Kritis

—Kusuma Rao

Compositions of venerable Mysore Sadashiva Rao were in focus in a concert under the joint auspices of Tyagaraja Gana Sabha and Mookambika Talavadya Kendra at the Vani Vidya Kendra on March 14. Chintalapalli Sreekantam D. Nagendra was the vocalist who rendered the kritis. He was supported on violin by J.K. Sridhar, Amor Anantakrishna Sharma on mridangam and Vyasa Vittala on Khayira. Bharati lent vocal support.

Nagendra Sastri began his concert with an Adi Tala Varnam in Puthuvrali, homage to Mumukshu Krishnaraja Wodeyar, in whose court Sadashiva Rao was an Asthana Vidwan. It was in Trisra Nalai rendered in first and second speeds. "Thalayannam Siddhi Vinayaka" (Smilaha Dhanyasa) set to Jhampa Tala was as crisp. A composition on Kanha Varadaraja Swami in Mukharai followed.

Kalyani came off well, as did the Kriti "Netikine Dhanyudani". The violinist's version of Kalyani was enlivening. The phrase 'Enanti Samhagyan, Koti Koti Mantrachchannana phalamu' was taken up. For Nivaval and swara, ibing full justice to both.

It is said that when Tyagaraja came to Chittoor

the birth place of Sadashiva Rao, in Unchavritti, the former composed a kriti in Todi "Sri Pavamana Kumararam" in praise of Tyagaraja and sang it before him.

The first two lines of the famous Kriti were taken up for a Pallavi, after the alap in Todi, which was interesting because of the illusion of Mohana when the artist exercised 'Smtilbhava' in it.

The 'Tani Avartanam in the difficult Jhampa Tala was handled expertly by 'Shiva' and Vyasa Vittala. Nagendra Sastri concluded his concert with a rare Jaavali in Athana 'Ekkathunnava', followed by Mangalam in Vasantha.

Book Released :

A book containing a selection of Sadashiva Rao's creations with notation was released on the occasion. A brief life-sketch underlining the high points in Sadashiva Rao's career is also included in the book, which has a foreword by Dr. R. Satyanarayana, the musicologist of Mysore.

Nagendra Sastri revealed that Sadashiva Rao was a sishya of Walajapet Venkatarammanna Bhagavata, a direct disciple of Tyagaraja.

He was born in Chittoor to Ganesha Rao and Krishna

Bai. When still young, his mother while serving lunch smothered him about a second helping of ghee. He took it to heart and left home.

He was the first artiste even who became a matriculate, working in the District Office. Later he was made an Asthana Vidwan in Mumukshu Krishna Raja Wodeyar's Court.

His compositions are in Telugu. They are full of artistic and lyrical beauty and set to difficult talas. At times they sound a bit heavy because of the pressure of Sahitya. Too wordy, one feels Nagendra Sastri deserves commendation for the valuable service he is rendering by focussing the attention of music-lovers, artistes and students on such rare compositions.

Music, Dance Institutions are invited to send news & reports on their activities. Articles and features are also welcome.

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City Percussionist Feted in Delhi

Musicians from as far-off places as Chennai, Vizag, Hubli, Bangalore, Hyderabad, Warrangal and Trichur assembled in Vasant Vidyā Kendra Hall, Vasant Vihar, Delhi, from March 25 to April 1 to pay homage to the musical trinity.

The week-long festival of music was organised by the Music Education Trust which has been formed to provide education in music. In pursuance of this the Trust has been arranging educative programmes like Lecterns, seminars, symposia and study circles. Giants in the field like Dr. Balamurali

krishna, Lalgudi Jayaraman, Madurai Seshagopalan, the Late D.R. Jayaraman, Prof. T.R. Subramanyam and R.K. Srikanth have repeatedly conducted study circles for the benefit of students in Delhi.

The trust perhaps is the only organisation in the North to have taken steps to create awareness for Layn and Layn Vidyās. Under this head, veterans like T.K. Murthy and Thiruvalluvar Sivaraman have enlightened the listeners of Delhi.

Apart from the 12 concerts featuring Vocals including six dhrots, 2 veena and a Nagaswara recital, a

symposium had been organised to reimburse the "Glories of Misari Subramanya Iyer's School" featuring T.K. Govinda Rao, T.R. Subramanyam, Dr. V.V. Srivatsa and Dr. T.V. Kuppuswamy. Besides the inaugural and valedictory sessions, there was a special session to honour cultural organisers with the title "Sangeeta Seva Nrata" Smt. Sushama Swaray, M.P. and former Minister for Information and Broadcasting presented the awards. Bangalore K. Venkataram of Percussive Arts Centre, Bangalore, received the honour. While introducing him, Prof. T.R. Subramanyam observed that the Centre is the only organisation in the World exclusively working for the Percussive Arts.

The others who received the honours were R. Ramachandran of Honesadhwani, Chennai and Bhargavi Sundararajan of Indo American Cultural & Religious Foundation, USA. A.V. Gokak, Secretary Department of Fertilizers, was the Chief Guest.

The honours function was followed by a melodious 3-hour vocal dhrot by Radrapatnam Brothers, R.N. Thyagarajan and Dr. R.N. Tharanathan supported by Charudatta Ramanyam of Hubli on Violin, D. Rajagopal of Trivandrum on Mridangam and Bangalore K. Venkataram on Ghatam.



Ghatam Venkataram

L.K. Pandit Deplores Cassette Culture

L.K. Pandit was in Bangalore in February for a five-day workshop, enlightening the participants with his rich music and inspiring talks.

Excerpts from an interview, as told to **Shruti Nanavaty**.

Pandit Laxman Krishnarao Pandit, is one of the most respected Hindustani vocalists of Gwalior Gharana, the fountainhead of all subsequent gharanas. It is his strict classicism and adherence to the gharana that has earned him the reputation of being a true representative of the unique styles.

Born in 1934, Panditji is the fifth generation of an unbroken lineage of legendary musicians. His grandfather, Pt. Shankar Rao Pandit was the direct disciple to the pioneers of Gwalior gharana like Ustad Halkhu Khan, Ustad Nathur Khan, Ustad

Nissar Hussain Khan. Panditji's father, Pt. Krishnarao Shankar Pandit has been one of the outstanding artistes of this school.

L.K. Pandit commands a mastery over Khyal, Tappa, Tarana, Ashtapadi and Thumri. In fact he is one of the few musicians who can render the taxing and demanding form of Tappa gayaki with ease and fluently. He possesses a rich repertoire of traditional compositions, inherited from his illustrious ancestors.

Panditji could be credited much for his success as a Guru. He has trained some

brilliant students, including his daughter Meeta Pandit. He was associated with the Faculty of Music and Fine Arts, Delhi University as Professor. His innate talent as a composer is experienced through his popular T.V. serial on music appreciation called 'Prabhati'. He has been with All India Radio as a producer of music, for several years. As an author he has several books to his credit including a biography on his father, 'Pt. Krishnarao Shankar Pandit' published by Roli Books.

Let me begin by asking you about your early days at Gwalior. It would be interesting to know about music of Gwalior in those bygone golden days.

LKP—In Gwalior, music was there in every person. There used to be so many mehls in a week, about 4 in 6 which went on all night. The atmosphere was more musical before the 40's since the king himself practised music. In the early days, they were trained to know each and every art. The Kings loved music. As the Sanskrit saying goes 'Yatha Raja, Tatha Praja' meaning as the King does, the people shall also do the same.



Pt. L.K. Pandit with his daughter Meeta Pandit



View of the workshop

In Gwalior even the villagers enjoyed music. I can talk only about the music during Raja Mansingh Tomar's reign. Since then Gwalior has been known as the land of music and culture. The musicians were loved and respected by all and even honoured. After the kings, there were also big Zamindars and Sardars who used to patronise music. The town was full of musicians.

In those days there were as many as 50 to 60 good musicians, both vocal and instrumental. In vocal music, my family was there and Ustad Faiyyaz Hussain Khan, in Tabla and Pakhavaj players was the great Parvatsingh and his family, in Sitar, Amir Khansahab from the Senia tradition, also great names in Jal-tarang, Harmonium, all kinds of musicians were produced in Gwalior.

You have been in the company of several music legends. Would you like to talk about your interac-

tion with them? What was the most important thing that you learnt from them, which you would like to share?

LKP—There is a great change in the attitude of music lovers. I don't want to call them music lovers or music critics. There were no class of music critics at that time. It came to be formed only after Independence. So there were no music reviews as such then. It was the great musicians who used to encourage people who came on to the stage. One incident comes to mind—

My father was a State musician. He used to regularly perform with others at the temple of the Scindhiya's. So we also as children used to accompany him and play the tanpura. The great Pakhavaj player Sri Parvatsingh used to come with his sons Vijay Singh and Gopal Singh. So it used to be a homely atmosphere in the temple. When the puja was over there used to be music.

Parvatsinghji used to be a very humorous person. Whenever my father would arrive at the Sam of a bandish, Parvatsinghji would gesture to me to start singing. And then I would sing and when we were nearing the Sam again he would again signal to me. By only signs he would guide me.

They all used to encourage us to practice and sing more. That way, so many different people used to give different important tips. But the essence of it was that they used to tell us to keep the voice in form and the body in form. So that was the most important thing.

You have just completed a five-day workshop. How did you find the response? Did you find the participants receptive enough?

LKP—Yes, to a certain extent they were receptive. In foreign countries those who



Meeta Pandit

are in music, they give their full attention and want to learn as much as possible. But here in India, we don't bother much. We do, but not to the maximum limit.

So, do you feel that in Bangalore, Hindustani music has a good future?

LKP—Why not? As long as good musicians and teachers are there. The more the people of Hindustani music shall increase, so shall the art grow.

To what extent should one study music theory? You yourself are wellread. Is it an important part of music training?

LKP—In India, a musician plays several roles. He composes, presents and plays. He composes except for the bandish, the whole extempore that he has to sing or play. So he must have knowledge in this. So a musician must know theory. They may not know the right technical terms as such but since music is a practical art, in some way or the other techniques are known and executed.

But then why is theory an integral part of music exams? Is it really necessary to learn about the history of music in an exam format?

LKP—In my opinion the curriculum should have two courses. One is theory and practical and the second should be practical based. Lots of things are being written and lot is being said

in music for which one does require the knowledge, at least an overall knowledge.

What is the role of a performer today? What are the qualities of a good performance?

LKP—The main quality is to impress and please the audience. This depends a great deal on the audience. A performer may be good but there should be a good audience too. Otherwise it is hard to please them. Even though the performance and the performer may be good, if the audience is poor in knowledge, there cannot be any rapport.

Then what is your opinion of today's audience? Do you receive the same feedback as in the past, from them?

LKP—No, I don't. Our music is all about extempore and creativity and one creates when one sings. That creation reaches its utmost if the audience is responsive enough. There should be a rapport between the two. Today's music is more like chamber music. In older days, if the musician made a mistake, like taking a wrong note or so, the audience would immediately react and say loudly, "What are you doing?". Now-a-days no one reacts like that. Tell me who reacts today? They applaud more and that too if the Tabala player has shown his prowess by playing a few quick bails or tihais.

It's true they get excited

with rhythms and quick, long taals...

LKP—Exactly, they do but excitement can also be created by staying on a note for long, isn't it? So that's the way it is now-a-days.

What is the identity of a Gharana today?

LKP—A gharana is a self-sufficient container and with change of time, music also does change. It is not static. Gharana is a good thing since it is not possible to take all the beautiful things in your music. Gharana will always stay in some form or the other. Its name may no longer be the same, but it will remain.

This adherence to a certain Gharana. Does it not prevent growth of an artiste?

LKP—No, the progress doesn't stop since gharana has unlimited scope and horizons. I don't think the creative ability is curbed because of it.

You are known for your total devotion towards the gharana you belong to. Haven't you ever felt the need to imbibe something from the other gharanas?

LKP—We have no mental blocks as such. We do listen and enjoy good music irrespective of gharana. Yes, one is influenced but just to listen not to imbibe. There is no need to imbibe really.

About Rag classification. They have been classified within 10 Thats. Although scholars have



View of the workshop

stated that it should be extended to 32, nobody has yet done it so far. Are you in favour of this? Do you find the need for a reclassification?

LKP: Yes, 10 Thats are not sufficient to include all the ragas, their number should increase. My father used to regard 12 thats. Actually, we use the word Melas for thats. This classification is meant only for students and has nothing to do with the singing aspect.

There is also the Ragang system which people do follow even today.

In the workshop you have taught a few bandishes, by singing them out and making the people repeat several times. Don't you believe in giving notation? Isn't notation necessary to keep for reference and preservation. I agree it is a skeleton only but it is still useful.

LKP—Of course, I do

believe in notation. But these bandishes that I taught are fixed in avarans and not in matras. In notation you have to fix them in matras. So the whole concept of teaching is changed as far as the hada khyals are concerned. Notation is useful only after learning from the guru. It is not good learning from notation. As you say, notation is used for reference and preservation. But sometimes the musician depends so much on notation that he forgets the composition. One should not be dependent that's all. Otherwise notation is definitely useful.

A last question about today's upcoming talent. Your opinion about them and advice?

LKP—The persons who learn from a guru are doing alright. But those whose guru are 'cassettes', their music is no good. There is a mixed feeling. I'm not happy with this new trend of learning from cassettes.

My advice is learn from a good guru, that's all.

Guidelines on Performing Techniques

The Gurnurao Deshpande Saugreta Sabha and its inspiration Pandit Vinayaka Torvi, have been organising workshops on Hindustani classical music, by musicians of reputed gharanas in Bangalore. Last

year, it was Pt. Yashwant Bua Joshi. This time the five-day workshop — from February 8 to 13, 1999, was by Veteran vocalist and the torch-bearer of Gwalior Gharana Pandit L.K. Pandit of Delhi. The workshop was for a selected

group of about 30 participants. It was of three-hour session daily.

Pandit Laxman Krishnarao Pandit is the fifth in an unbroken lineage of legendary musicians of the illustrious Gwalior Gharana. Panditji's grandfather Pt. Krishnarao

Pandit and father Pt. Krishnarao Shankar Pandit were two of the most popular artistes of this gharana.

It was a memorable experience for those who attended his workshop, enjoying the opportunity to openly discuss music and express themselves. The workshop was particularly targeted towards being successful on the performing front. Panditji gave a list of guidelines on the techniques to be adopted during a performance. He parted with useful tips on how one should maintain one's voice and emphasised on the importance of voice culture for a musician. The other aspects that he covered were on keeping the body fit, to practise yoga and must important to practise or do *riyaz* everyday, regularly.

The mid-week sessions were devoted to demonstrating the right way of elaborating a raga in regard to the usage of *aalaap*, *hol-aalaap*, *taan*, *tal taan*, *laykari* and the application of *meend*, *gamak*, *khatka*, *murki*, etc. Panditji follows the traditional Gwalior gharana format in developing ragas, what is known as '*Ashtang gayaki*', a systematic eight-fold development of a raga. The participants were taught a few traditional compositions in various musical forms, viz., *Bada Khyals* in



Pt. L.K. Pandit

vilambit laya, followed by their suitable *Chhota Khyals* in *Madhya laya*, *Tarana*, a *Thumri*, *Hori*, *Pail*, etc. The rags that these were set to ranged from the most popular Yaman to jod-rags like Gand Malhar and Soor Malhar. The lighter modes were in Tilang, Khamaj and Bhairavi.

The highlight was the demonstration of the difficult musical form, *Tappa*. Panditji is one of the few musicians who can render the difficult genre of *Tappa* with ease and fluidity which demands constant innovation.

Talking to the participants, one learnt that this workshop had revitalised them and made them feel more motivated towards becoming good artistes. It gave them a glimpse of what music was in those halcyon days.

Such workshops are

indeed fruitful and more and more veterans could be invited to enlighten and inspire the locals.

The workshop was rounded off with a valedictory function where the participants were presented with certificates. Mr. J.K. Maddurkeshna, Director, Dept. of Kannada and Culture, gave away the certificates.

This was followed by a Hindustani vocal recital by Panditji's daughter, Meeta Pandit who is carrying on the rich heritage of her forefathers. She is the sixth generation of the Gharana and has the distinction of being the first female musician in the family.

Meeta made a head start with *Phoriya Dhanashri*, singing a *bada khyal* followed by a *chhota khyal*. The elaboration of the raga was in the traditional *Ashtang gayaki* format. She then presented a *Tappa*, which proved her ability to execute the form with flavour and ease. This was followed by a couple of *bandishes* in *Bahar* after which she rounded it off with a couple of *bhajans*. It was Meeta's first concert in the city. She was accompanied by Gaurang Kulkarni on the *P tabla* and Vyasamurthy Katti on Harmonium.

The concert was sponsored by Aarohi, Bangalore.

Trichy Felicitates Chinna Moulana

The New Year dawned in the music world with splendour when Dr. Sheik Chinnamoulana was conferred the Sangitha Kalanidhi birudha by the Music Academy, Chennai. Felicitations to the latest Sangitha Kalanidhi followed at many places soon after. It was fitting that Rasika Ranjana Sabha, one of the oldest among such institutions, got up one such function at Tiruchirappalli, the town of his choice end of January.

The function was presided over by Ms. P. Danalakshmi, Station Director of All India Radio, Tiruchirappalli. The chief guest was Dr. N. Pattabhiraman, Editor-in-chief, *Sruthi*, Chennai and the

guest of honour was Mr. Eero Hameenniemi, International Music Composer, Finland. The function began in the traditional fashion with Mangala Isai and was followed by an invocation song, rendered by Miss Akila, great grand-daughter of Dr. Chinnamoulana. Dr. Jayapal, President of R.R. Sabha, welcomed the gathering that overflowed the hall. Ms. P. Danalakshmi in her address referred to the qualities of head and heart of the distinguished musician and touched upon the aptness of his choice for Sangitha Kalanidhi in the centenary year of Tiruvalluthurai Rajarathinam Pillai. Dr. Pattabhiraman dwelt upon the unique sweetness, serene and purity of Dr. Moulana's

playing the piped instrument.

Mr. Hameenniemi who had the unique distinction of receiving Dr. Sheik and his party in Finland and unravelling Carnatic music in general and Nagaswaram in particular to the Finnish music lovers, thrillingly narrated his experiences and stressed the importance of realising the role of music in doing away distinctions of all kinds, uniting humanity and ushering in peace.

The maestro was virtually showered with garlands and shawls.

The function reached its fitting finale with a nagaswaram recital by Mannargudi Sankaranarayana and Parameswaran accompanied on the thavil by Haridwar-mangalam Palani velu and Thanjavur Govinda rajan. N. Sekar, Sabha Secretary, proposed vote of thanks.

Stop Press :

Just as this piece was in the press, the sad demise of the veteran Vidwan was received. *Phoenix* pays homage to the departed, one who has regaled listeners the world over.



Sheik Chinna Moulana being felicitated in Trichy

Mixed bag in Udupi Sabha's Decennial

—Shyamprasad Rao

Raga Dhama Udupi, a music organization of Udupi celebrated a week-long music festival from Feb. 1 in its Decennial year.

The festival dedicated to the sacred memory of Adiguru Paramaharadasa and the Trinity (Tyagaraja, Syama Sastry, Tyagaraja and Muttuswami Dikshitar), presented two concerts by junior artistes, below 15 years of age and a Hindustani vocal.

The festival was inaugurated and blessed by Sri Vishwa Prasanna Tirtha Swamiji of Pegavar Mutt. Sri K.K. Puri, Registrar, Academy of General Education, Manipal, was the chief guest.

Master Chaitanya Kumar of Bangalore along with Master B.K. Raghu (Violin) and Master V. Narayana murthy (Mridangam) stole

the show in the inaugural 'Mangala Dhwani' concert, each manifesting his mastery over his idiom.

The main artiste of the day Jayalakshmi Santhanam rendered about 14 numbers without dwelling much upon any raga for elaboration. The expositions were traditional, but lacked lustre. The subtlety exhibited in ragas such as Devamaritha Varshini (Evarani), Atana (Bugilam teredu) and Saraswathi Manuhari (Enta vedu) deserve appreciation. While Jnanam Sundaram supported her on violin, J. Vaidyanathan gave mridangam support.

Malladi Brothers (Rama Prasad and Ravi Kumar) of Vijayawada, gave a lively recital the next day. The perfect synchrony in their voices and a perfect under-

standing in sharing their raga or swara renderings evoked deep sense of music even among lay listeners.

The concert was well planned. Poorvi Kalyani (Ninn Vinagamari) in Viloma Chapu talam and Todi (Kobuvamaregala) in Adi talam were in focus. The Naluneri and Valetti plans of renderings had a nice blend in their singing. S.V. Narayan and Arjun Kumar ably supported the vocalists respectively on violin and mridangam along with Chandrammuli on kharjira.

Anuradha Suresh Krishnamurthy gave a tidy vocal recital on the evening of February 3. The Bhairavi attata tala varnam in misra madhi set the trend. Her 'Sugasaga' in Sriranjani had an intelligent tripartite kalpana-swara Korvais. Her Anubala Bhairavi (Tyagaraja yoga) and Shankarabharanam (Pogadiralo Ranga) were neat and did proud to her father's (Palghat K.V. Narayanaswamy) name. The quality of the voice which often becomes squeezed and flattened beyond nishada (though it has a good range) needed some culturing. The Lathantapriya (Marechitavo) piece had a lilt of Hindustani Jogi. S.V. Narayan (violin) and Cheluvvaraj (mridangam) were the sidemen for the concert.



In Concert : Hyderabad Brothers

Vairamangalam Laxmi narayanan of Chennai, a senior vidwan, gave a vintage music. Though the voice was non-cooperative, he could establish an easy rapport with his listeners with a scholarly music embellished with Kalpana swara prastharams. The swara patterns carved well with the grooves of sahitya. Mella Mellane Bandane (Mahana), Tave Tripura Sundari (Suddha Saveri) and Pankaja hehana (Kalyani) evoked such an experience. In the Garuda Dhwani (Tatva meruga taruna) piece the three senior vidwans—Vairamangalam M.S. Anantharaman—Madhiri mangalam Swaminathan—had unique sway of sangathis through the Western notes, effortlessly gliding to Sama, Darhari Kanada, Kalyana Vasantha and finally getting back to Garuda Dhwani, with a flurry of swaras.

Paroor Tri M.S. Anantharaman—M.A. Sundareswaran—M.A. Krishnaswamy gave a captivating violin recital, which attracted a huge crowd at Nutam Ravindra Mantapa of MGM College. The trio had Madhiramangalam and G. Harishankar for mridangam and kharjira as sidemen. The Chowla (Pranamanyaham), Atana (Annapama) and Varali (Sheshhehala) pieces rendered in tandem by the father and sons were subtle and quite appealing. The Dvijavanti (Chitashree) rendered mainly by Anantharaman with his high fidelity

touch evoked deep satisfaction in the listeners. The 'Paroor Phenomenon' had its full sway Kamhhoji (O Ranga Shnyee) which embellished not only all the nuances of the raga, but sported expansive tana. The Swara passages were laid scholarly kanakkus marking the entire concert. The tani which followed drew applause due to the 'Harishankar Phenomenon'.

The Tyagaraja Pancharatna ensemble led by the President of Raga Dhana, the popular guru vidwan Madhoor P. Balasubramanyam was organized on February 6 followed by Mysore G.N. Nagamani Srinath's concert.

Nagamani's recital brought disappointments in many ways. She was not in her grain, nor did her sidemen give the needed minimum support. She tried to do good with Darhar (Yachana), Shubha Pantavarali (Ne Pagada Kunte) and Vachaspati (Kanda Chudame), but the violinist (Yashasvi) and mridangist (Vasudev) could never rise to the occasion.

Chits started flowing from audience towards the organizers, wanting to know the reason for the change of accompanying artistes who replaced those printed in the cards. The secretary had to apologise for the flaw. The listeners further got annoyed at the announcement of Nagamani's absence for the next day's lac-drum and the valedictory function, due to

her preoccupations.

On the concluding day, in a day-long programme, children sang the Pillari gitas of Purandaradasa followed by Ravi Kiran's Hindustani vocal recital.

The young artiste of Manipal Ravi Kiran has a sonorous voice with a bhava laden manodharma. His expositions of Bilaskhaori Todi was mature and intricate. The rendering of varieties of taans, good kala pramamam all through made even the pandits raise brows in appreciation. The chota khyal (Alaiah Bilaval) and a short Dasara pada (Mann Behag) were worth recollecting. Shankar Shenny supported him on harmonium and Dinesh Shenoy on tabla.

In a discussion on 'How to listen to Music?', in the post lunch session, A. Ishwarrah Editor, Udayavani the moderator and eight participants selected from different art and education fields spoke. M.V. Vasantha Kumari (Retd. from AIR), P. Nityannada Rao (Organizer, Yakshagana), Prathilha L. Samaga (Bharatmatya teacher), Srikantha Somayaji (Light music composer, Lecturer), Prof. D.G. Hegde (Yakshagana, Hindustani music lover), S. Hayavadana Upadhyay (Writer, Lecturer), U.S. Ramakrishna Bhat (Music teacher) and Shashidhara Mastibail (Student) made valuable contribution on the topic.

To be continued in Page-24

Captivating Choreography

Music, as is well-known, is an integral part of dance. In fact, there can't be dance without music. Good music can itself be a 50-plus to a dance recital.

If this is the case with all forms of dance, its role in a dance feature or dance-drama is much more assertive. The choreographed piece on Jayadeva's immortal "Gita-Govinda" put on heels by Radha Sridhar's Sri Venkatesha Natya Mandira is a case in point. The enjoyable feature figured in the 10-day Nrityutsava, which formed part of the year-long Golden Jubilee celebrations of Keshava Nritya Shala in February.

No doubt, the theme is old hat for fanciers of dance, the classic mounted by almost

every choreographer worth the name.

Radha's choreography was on familiar lines. What made the difference is Jambavi Jaiprakash's captivating musical score and her own emotion-filled rendering of the Ashtapadis. With the result the aspects of dance and music coalesced soulfully to lend intensity to each sequence so as to inspire lead dancers like Purnima, Manasa and Malathi. Each one of them danced like one possessed bringing their respective characters come alive convincingly. No wonder the production was able to make an indelible impact.

Another dance feature that made an immediate impact on the discerning viewer is Vyjayanti Kashi's

"Ambe". Though a group choreography the single dancer who held the portrayal together was Vyjayanti herself in the title role. She depicted the changing moods of Ambe from hope to anguish, to despair and the final triumph convincingly. But the supporting characters, mostly guest artistes from elsewhere were rather theatrical, the avoidable high decible in their dialogue adding to the discomfiture.

Similar was the sound and fury in music that robbed the aesthetic sensibilities in Arun Kalavilarn's "Snow White". Yet its popular story, well thought-out props and fine team work of the players stood in good stead to make a merit of the production.

Sadhana Nrityakalpa's "Viswamitra-Gayatri" offered very little dancerly elements for exploitation, the portrayal throughout having to draw on tableaux than theatrical points.

Bharat Sangeet-Sangeet Academy's "Andal" scored because of its sensitive appeal, it was a satisfying production.

Shivaratri Charivaria

Shivaratri entertainment this year was as mixed a fare as ever. It all started with a three-day festival by Nupura, Lalita Srinivasan's dance



A sequence from Gita Govinda

school whose "Nitya-Nritya" was verily the forerunner for this very idea. It is nice that Nupura has resumed the festival though shorn of its original guity and grandeur.

Nupura's senior student Ajay Viswanath presented the inaugural dance. His crisp Postupanjali revealed a keen sense of laya, a neat stance vouching for his confidence. His nritta in "Mamadennenge Aruhuterya" the Dharmavati Varna of Dwaraki Krishnaswamy was crisp. Though shorn of grace, the rise in the dismissal of the theermanams spoke for steady practice. But his facials seemed short in registering the underlying longing for his beloved. The Ashtapadi "Maniyam Chalisa" could not give a better account of his mukhya, despite the other elements being trim.

Among the other dancers who figured in the fare Lakshmi Gopalaswamy and Guwri Kesari have claimed attention in these columns once too often in bear repetition!

As against this, the Academy of Music's programme was a one day affair, the evening extending upto mid-night. It started with the Bharathanatyam by Deepti Sudheendra. Her invocatory piece and Anandata (Sriranjini) vouched for a sound grounding in laya, the spacious movements milking to choreographic elegance.

But the "Khamlita" in "Aduvum" cholluval (Sourashtra) failed to come fully evocative.

Her guru, Padmini Ravi's recital was undoubtedly one of the main attraction in the festival. Accordingly, she came out with an interesting choreography where an unsophisticated belle seeks to realise Lord Shiva in his myrical forms. A string of choice melodies like "Maniyarangil" (Manirang), "Pitham Ennal" (Jonnuri) "Viritta Sherjane" and other verses went well to elaborate the idea, Padmini using her histrionic finesse most convincingly to drive home the point. But the musical support betrayed an utter lack of rehearsals failing to enhance its overall impact. The flute and mridangam

were totally out of time with the modal frame. More shocking was the Bohemian costume adorned of Padmini, something revolting in Bharathanatyam, reminding me more of Ali Baba than a classical Indian dancer of her repute!

The usual Eka-Aneka of Prasiddha foundation was an all-night variety film, where almost every known Indian performing art was arrayed representation, including Yakshagana, Pratiksha Prahlad's interlude was easily the pick in that variegated canvas. Her thrust was through the lovely inter-pretation for "Brihanleeswari" (Kannada) of Bala Muralikrishna. Dotted with flowing sthanakas and a whole array of eye-filling charis, it had an emotional

Off on Concert Tour of US



Vidushi, Kum. V. Kalavathy

Nadatarangini, of Maryland, USA, a cultural organisation of which

Vidushi Usha Char is Director has sponsored a concert tour of Vidushi V. Kalavathy (Vocal), Vinushi Pushpa Kashinath (Veena) and Vidwan Anur Dattatreya Sharma (Mridangam) from June 1999 for a period of 3 months.

They are scheduled to perform in Columbus, Cleveland, Washington DC, Pittsburgh, Cincinnati and some other US centres. By the time this is in print, the trio would have covered the first phase of their itinerary. □

appeal, in which P. Rama's lively vocalism had its fair share!

Yetiraja Vaibhava

Earlier "Yetiraja Vaibhavam", a dance-drama was the highlight in the Shantala Nrityotsava. The concept itself sounded attractive, the choral chanting of "Bhaja Bhashyakaram", "Bhaja Yetirajam" lending an electrifying start to the proceedings. But instead of drawing on episodes in the saintly life of Ramanuja to exemplify the epithets "Bhashyakara" and "Yetiraja", the choreography revolving round a string of Parashurama proved a damp squib. How much more evocative if characters like Kotesha, Yamaacharya and Kanchipurna were portrayed to strengthen the contribution of Ramanuja was left to the imagination of the discerning viewer!

Padmaja Suresh who presented a solo in the festival straightaway made an impression with her sprightly angikas and easy stance. The overall impress of the popular Varna "Dunike Taga" (Thodi) was as deep. If her Nritya was marked for its crisp adavus, her abhinaya was articulate, though the portrayal fell short in its rechikas.

Young and guzzle-like Keerti Ramgopal was the other soloist. Her Pushpanjali showed her as lively as ever. Though a wee bit in a hurry, her laya couldn't be faulted,

nor was she averse to flexions, as evidenced in "Vanna Mayile Shitra Nil" a Varna in Ahhogi. Though verbose, it is sonorous musically, the Nritya invested with trite adavus. Keerti was equal in the task, though her facial fell short in exploiting the spicy "sancharis".

Kinkini Nrityotsav :

Among the guests from outside the State in Kinkini's 16th Annual Jayarama Rao and Dhameshi Rao, the Kuchipudi pair from Delhi

had aroused the curiosity of fanciers. Even as they started the salutation to Ganapati, it was obvious that the bun drew heavily on Bharathanatyam, most items exemplifying Nritya as against the customary Natya associated with the Andhra style. The other numbers in the card like Dashavatara (Prakasa Payonilhi), "Evvare Vaadu" (Saveri) confirmed the assumption. Nor did the Geetupadesha and the customary Tharangam (Marakulamanimaya) stand



Vanashree Rao, Jayarama Rao
Delhi

testimony to the Kuchipudi idiom. But one must concede that the duo went about their portrayal in right earnest, using a variety of jathis and sthanakas to lend credibility to their inheritance.

But the one artiste whose performance had aroused the maximum interest of both the dancing fraternity and the lay was Padmini Ravi scheduled for the Republic Day. The title of her offering "Kalpana" had made it as curious.

Conceptually it was rather simple. She had picked up a few familiar episodes from Ramayana and Mahabharata for the exfoliation. What added spice to the interpretation is the inter-changing of the respective hues Rama and Krishna. To imagine Krishna in the Shoorpanakhi sequence or Rama in Rukmini Parinaya could be fascinating. And that is what made it all really exciting, though here again Padmini's sense of Aharya was

revolting. It was in bad taste to say the least, hardly doing justice to the epic characters!

At about the same time, for its Subhanlal Memorial Programme, the Malleswaram Sangeet Sabha billed a Bharathanatya recital by Urmila Doreswamy, a student of Padmini Rau. Though the sprightly youngster had gone through her Ranga Pravesha only six months earlier, there was hardly any signs of the fledgling in her portrayal. After running through the initial numbers with casual disdain, Urmila settled down to the stately Varna "Nee Inda Mayai" (Dhanyasi) investing the Nritha with organised alavus. If her angikas glowed with subtle flexions her unhurried grace heightened her movements. Her facials, exemplifying the Vivahutkhandita was also evocative, though her "drishti" has yet to gain in variety. Vasikasajja based "Dari" chuchutunnali (Shankarabharana) was more challenging. But Urmile easily propounded the Nayika's anxiety to behold her lord. But emotionally she has yet to learn to make the depiction fully evocative.

Ranga Pravesha

The interval witnessed only one debuttal in Bharathanatya. The dancer is Anapayani Dasi Mayashark, a student of Indira Kadambi. As it is the case with most foreign students of Bharathanatya, it was evident that Anna has



Anapayani dasi

diligently imbibed the nuances of the idiom. Indeed her Thattumettu was so meat, her "anga shabdham" so sprightly and her stance so elegant, she hardly ever appeared like a beginner.

The Varnam "Entaninne" (Khamas) unfolded a variety of alavus, executed with effortless ease by Anna. The exposition of Vivahutkhandita in the sthayi was equally impressive, as one could see that she has understood the situation. Anna as convincingly portrayed the sanchari in the Bhairavi palam "Inimel Avarikkum Enakkum" a conviction far above the average.

India for whom Anna is the first student to go on stage also did well in Nathuvagam!

ATHREYA



Urmila Doreswamy

Glimpses of Gwalior Gayaki

Pandit L.K. Pandit, doyen of the Gwalior gharana was in the centre stage of the Gururao Deshpande Sangeet Sabha's annual music festival in Bangalore recently. The veteran vocalist not only inaugurated the 16th all-night festival in memory of Gururao Deshpande, but also regaled the packed audience at the HSe Gymkhana Club hall with his absorbing vocalism. Mr. Krishnan, General Manager of MICO, presided over the function.



The festival commenced with a vocal recital by young and promising Manjusha Kulkarni from Sangli. Her rendition of raag Kamod with powerful voice did not take long to capture the audience. She concluded with two Marathi natyageeth which were impressive.

L.K. Pandit, the main attraction of the programme commenced with Bageshri, his exposition of alap in his powerful voice making an

immediate impact. The phrases alternating komal gandhar and shudh madhyam. Teevra dhairat and komal nishad were exceptionally appealing. Nat Kedar, a rarely heard raag was as evocative. Panditji also sang Basanth, the befitting "ruti" raag. His control over the voice through meends and gamakh was remarkable. Known for his Tappa, he presented a short tappa which was enlivening.

Another top-ranking artiste of Gwalior Gharana, Malini Rajashekar began with raag Bageshri angka Chadrakans. The crisp alap followed by vigorous taans and intelligent laykari was highly rewarding. A short composition in Shiranjini was attractive too. Maliniji, known for singing Tappa presented one in Kafi which was lively.

Ustad Bale Khan of Dharwad who hails from the family of Sitar Ratna Rehmata Khan, commenced his concert with Lalit. The



first stroke of taraf verily transformed the night to dawn. The audience enjoyed each bit of phrases embodied in the alap jhod and jhala. The drum gat in a faster tempo electrified the audience.

The organiser Pt. Vinayak Torvi began his concert with Todi. The detailed exposition of alap in mandra and madhya Saptak was melodious. The gamak and sapat taan coupled with katke, murkhis enhanced the beauty of the raag. Alaya Bilawal, a favourite of Gwalior gayaki, was as soulful. He concluded with a Meera Bhajan in Bhairavi. Particularly some phrases in Bhairavi were emotionally moving, some phrases in upper octave reminiscent of Pt. Bhimsen Joshi's singing. It was an unforgettable experience.

Memorable Spring Music Festival

Sri Rama Lalitha Kala Manilir and the Devagiri Sangeetha Sabha conducted a seven-day Spring Music Festival in the open air theatre in Banashankari II Stage from March 3.

Musician sisters G.V. Ranganayakamma and G.V. Neela, the Directors of the popular Music School are engaged in such artistic activities, besides teaching music to talented girls and boys since the Institution's inception in 1955.

The seven-day festival was inaugurated by the renowned vocalist Sudha Raghunathan who was featured in the opening concert too. Commencing with the popular Todi Varna she unfolded Sriranjini (Sugasuga Mridanga Talama) and Mohana Kalyani (Bhuvaneshwariya) in an organised manner. The highlight of the recital was Mayamala-

vagowla, the raga elaboration followed by Morni Samana. It was an impressive recital.

She was ably assisted on Violin by S.S. Raghavenbra Rao, on Mridangam by Thiruvannur Vaidyanathan and on Ghatam by Dayananda Mohite.

Local favourite S. Shankar on the next day chose the Kalyani Varna (Vanajakshi) followed by Arabhi (Sri Saraswathi) and Kambhoji (Oh Ranga Shayer), the latter blended with vigorous and graceful sangatis. His Reethigowla glowed with all its grandeur, the Tana and Pallavi (Murugha Shanmukha Mamorugha) in Khandanadai, Aditala captivating the listeners.

S.V. Narayanan on Violin, V.S. Rajagopal on Mridangam and G.S. Rammojan on Ghatam lent competent support to the artists.

E. Gaayatri, the well-known Vainika commenced her recital with the Hamsadhvani Varna. A rare kriti in Purnvi Kalyani and the alap for Muthyannavathi were equally... evocative... The main kriti in Mayamala-vagowla and Swati Thirunal's composition in Gowla were the other highlights. She was ably assisted on Mridangam by Malarimangalam Swaminathan and Sukanya Ramugopal on Ghatam.

T.V. Shankaranarayanan was in fine fettle.... Accompanied on violin by H.K. Venkatram and N. Vasudev on Mridangam and on Ghatam by M.A. Krishna Murthy, Shankaranarayanan commenced his recital with Jaya Jaya Ganapathi (Hamsadhvani), a composition of Ganapati Sachchidananda Swamiji. His Jata Murare (Arabhi) was soulful. Etanmura in Kalyani and Raga, Tana, Pallavi in his favourite Kammala-gowla in 'Tisra Tripata (Sarasadulu Netra Sowmya Keshava) stood out for its felicity and technical virtuosity.

The scholarly Neela Ramugopal's recital next was of a high order, her aesthetic sensibility holding a sway on the listener. Swathi Thirunal's Shankarabharanam Varna gave a flying start to her recital. Neela's natural grace added lustre... to the



Sudha Raghunathan who sang for the inauguri concert, lighting the lamp to herald the festival. Organiser G.V. Neela and G.V. Ranganayakamma look on

Kalpanaswaras in Karaharnpriya (Gana pathiye). Vasantha Bhairavi (Nee dayarada) and Bhairavi (Shyama Shastri's Sari Evaramma). Narayayagawla, with a rarely heard kriti Sri Ramain Raghukulad, Were as wholesome. The Raga, Tana, Pallavi in Dharmavathi (Misra Thripudu) embellished with ragamalika swaras was the highlight of the enjoyable recital. Her disciple Neeraja Raghavan assisted her in vocal. Embar Kannan, disciple of Kanya Kumari in Violin, Arjun Kumar on Mridangam and Ranganatha Chakravarti in Ghatam.

Popular M.S. Sheela's

concert on the concluding day happened to be the 280th performance of the Sabha. It was a highly rewarding recital. The Kanada Varna Gajananayntham (Chakra vaka) and Jata Morare (Aralhi).....an impressively. Rama Ramana (Vasantha bhairavi) and Ramanatham Bhajeham (Kamavarulini) were neat in their textual finesse. Neekela dayaradu Rama (Kokiladwani) and the Raga, Tana, Pallavi in Kedaragawla (Chaitanya Matya) (Shivapathi, Pashupathi, Knitsapathi, Shakthipathi) were remarkable for this melodic

grace. She received an able support by B.U. Ganesh Prasad on Violin, A.V. Anand on Mridangam and R.A. Rajagopalan on Ghatam.

Rangashree's Bharatha natyam recital was a bonus in the festival. She selected ragas in the Gowla series for her items. Jhanhavi Jaya prakash's pleasant vocal was the other high spot of the performance.

The Sabha did well in assigning different Gowla suffixed ragas to each artiste, the latter fulfilling the requirement as effectively.

FAC

Bharathanatyam debut in U.S.



Little Aparna with her guru Supriya Desai of N Carolina

Though the number of Bharathanatyam students in America is on the increase, many of them especially among the NRIs prefer to go through their Ranga Pravesha in their homeland. Bangalore itself has seen many such debuts in the recent past.

Aparna Chatterjee of North Carolina, however, is an exception. Student of Bangalore-born Supriya Desai, Director of Payal School of Indian Dance in N.

Carolina, the nine-year old triplet made her bow in September last before an appreciative audience which included a couple of renowned gurus from India.

The card was in the accepted "nirga" including a varna, "Adi Shivane" (Thodi). What impressed the homely crowd is the supreme confidence in which Aparna ran through the programme. True, she is too young to comprehend the intricacies of nhhinaya. But there was enough to vouch that her grounding in laya is sound. Her "anga shuddha" is also unalterable, though the linear movements are not in place, as could be made out from a well-recorded videotape. Indeed, she shows

promise and it must be conceded that Supriya has made as good a beginning as a teacher as she did as a debutante..... way back in the late seventies.

More surprising is that Supriya should have managed to get around some of the best talents for the ensemble which actually means half the battle is won! With Janhavi Jaiprakash to render the songs to the accompaniment of V.K. Raman (Flute), B.R. Hemant and Chandrasekhar (Violin), Gurmurthy and R. Srihari (Mridangam) and S.V. Giridhar and S.V. Balakrishna (Morsing) it is indeed a dream music team, one which should have inspired Supriya who provided Nattuvangam.

Echoes from the Boat Houses

—S.N. Sivaswamy

Way back in the late forties and early fifties, Alappuzhai, Kerala's fast growing industrial city was still a sleepy little town known only for its backwaters lined with house boats, its annual Boat Race and the ancient Amman Koil of Mullakkal. I had gone there to attend the marriage of my brother-in-law, Ambhi, but had never dreamt that I would find in that little market town, a perennial source of classical music.

My wife, Rajam had told me about a family where everyone was either an accomplished musician or had abundant knowledge of music. The head of this family was a prosperous lawyer by name Parthasarathy Iyengar, affectionately known to all as Papa Mamma, a friend and colleague of Rajam's grandfather, Krishna Iyer.

Our wedding party was guest one day at the hospitable residence of Papa Mamma, set in cool sylvan surroundings. I expected Ariyakkudi Ramannuja Iyengar to be present there, as I had learnt he was a close friend of our host and frequently visited him. However, Ariyakkudi was away elsewhere on tour, but his influence was evident in the musical milieu of that household.

It was a large family with

many children, and all of them, big and small, were well versed in music. We were entertained by a small girl, hardly three or four year old, who identified raga after raga, much in the way Ravikiran did in packed houses in later years.

(Very recently, when we attended a concert in Chennai by Trichur Ramachandran, we met the Secretary of the all-Women Sabha which had organised the concert and discovered to our surprise and delight that she was Parimala, Papa Mamma's daughter who identified ragas for us decades ago).

At Papa Mamma's house in Alappuzhai, we were regaled with a full length concert by a boy of under ten accompanied by an even smaller boy on Mridangam. The boy chose for elaboration a rather difficult raga, Shubhapantavarali and followed it up with the Dixitar Kriti "Ramanatham bhajeham" replete with neravals and swarams at "Kumara Gurugaha Mahitam" which Ariyakkudi used to sing with aplomb. This boy later grew up to become a top order musician. He is the now famous Alappuzhai Venkateshan!

Papa Mamma had appointed a disciple of Ariyakkudi as tutor to his children. His name was V.C. Vaidyanatha Bhagavatar, known in music

circles as Vaitha Bhagavatar. He could not sing well, but was an excellent teacher. He was occasionally heard over the radio, but his voice was far from being pleasant. Nevertheless his musical knowledge was profound and his head was brimming with musical nuances and phrases, which he somehow managed to transfer to his pupils whose voices he used to envy.

Among Vaitha's little pupils was my wife (later to be) and her two cousins and a sister-in-law (to her) and to them he endowed his rich knowledge. Among the many beautiful compositions he taught them were a few Devaranamas which Ariyakkudi used to sing in full fledged classical style, instead of relegating them to the tail end of concerts as so called 'tukkadals'.

Vaitha taught those Devaranamas to the youngsters, but few of the trainees went on to perform in the public and the majestic echoes of great composition like 'Yadava nee ha Yudukulanandana' in Kamladhari 'Yenu Dhanyalo' in 'Todi', 'Kande na Govindana' in Saveri, 'Nambi Kettavarillavo' in Kalyani, in the Ariyakkudi 'hani' of exquisitely sculptured 'Sangatis' remained confined to social gatherings, drawing room parties, winking parlours and such other limited audiences.

Kindling Interest in Dance Art

Came summer, it is time for short-term courses in fine arts. Dance does not fall behind. And the one such course entitled "Summer Classical Culture Camp" is organised annually by Natya Darpana, run by Kumari Jaya, a senior student of Jayalakshmi Alva of Mangalore.

Claimed to be the first of its kind (in dance), the camp started functioning from 1988 and is gaining popularity year after year.

The aim of the camp is to kindle interest and enthusiasm in Bharathanatyam among the younger generation. Jaya claims she has greatly succeeded in achieving the objective. The camp has this year started

functioning from April 15.

Open to students in general, it consists daily three-hour intensive training in the art. Music also forms part of this training. It has helped scouting talent, those with aptitude pursuing dance even after the camp.

The camp is held not only in Bangalore, but also reaches its outskirts like Dasarahalli, Jalahalli and Yelahanka. Denkanakota in the adjoining Tamilnadu also has a centre for imparting such training. Students who qualify themselves are not only encouraged to take examination in dance, but also provided opportunities to learn to sing for dance, nattuvangam, choreography, etc. In the beginning, the

camp had attracted 100 students. Presently it has swelled to four times that number and it is gratifying that many students from far-off places are evincing interest in the camp.

As usual, a public performance will be organised at the conclusion of the camp. The venue generally is the Ravindra Kalakshetra, often spreading to a few other locales too. The date of the performance will be notified in due course.

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Generally, generate ideas that will go to all-round improvement of Phoenix.

Thanks.

—Ed



Kumari Jaya helping a camper receive the Certificate in 1998

Dance related music in recent times has made strides laudably succeeding in answering the call for compositions in our own lingua-franca. A couple of such compositions by the late Muthachar had made their way on to the stage. With him out of the scene, they have become obscure.

More recently, Dwaraki Krishnaswamy, a scholarly musician who has not only been lending flute support in ensembles for dance, but also scored music for several dance-dramas with telling effect, has come out with a variety of compositions in Kannada, some of which have already become popular with dancers.

But the Mysore-based Geetha Seetharam who is an AIR-graded vocalist besides being a Master's degree holder in Library Science, has gone about the task with greater understanding of the



needs and requirements of a dancer. Her compositions, all in Kannada, verily cover the entire gamut of the Bharathanatyam format (marga), from the Jatiswaram to the Keertana, the Varna, the Padam, the Javali and Thillana. Each one of them is couched in appropriate ragas, mostly in the Janya variation. The Pada varnas, though Bhakthi-oriented easily lend themselves for facile 'rasa-bhinaya' too.

More importantly, Geetha herself has rendered them, the four sets cut into an album of two cassettes which should facilitate the aspirants and their vocalists to imbibe the 'mritu' and 'dhatu' in full measure. A companion to this album is a book **Geetha Sindhu** containing the compositions, fully notated and arranged Margu-wise.

Indeed, it is a praise worthy effort which should go a long way in enriching the repertoire of many a dancer.

The name Anasuya Kulkarni

karni is so indelibly linked with Ankling, the Indonesian bamboo instrument that her accomplishments as a senior vocalist adept in both the Carnatic and Hindustani variations has escaped the attention of musical buffs. It is also true that without that background Anasuya could not have adopted Ankling in



the Carnatic milieu. The cassette under note, produced by Ganalahari for the Perenssion Arts Centre, vouches for her attainment in both these dispensations. There are quite a few oldtime favourites like Ananthadhami Gann (Jingla), Devadidevi (Sonada vinodini), Garuda gamana (Nagasvaravali) besides a Thiruppugazh and a devaranama. Nalina Mohan on violin, V. Krishna on mridangam Gita Prasanna on khanjira have embellished its aesthetic endearments. Fine listening.

S.N.C.



Wrong Representation

Dear Editor,

This has reference to wrong presentation of facts in the article 'Varied Fare in Kalakara Mandal's Jubilee' by Pramila Lochan, in the Dec. 1998-Jan. 1999 issue of Phoenix.

It says "The second session had a Hindustani vocal performance by two young upcoming artistes, Dhamanjaya Hegde (disciple of Pt. Vinayaka 'Turi') and Hemang Mehta (disciple of Pt. Jasraj)."

The fact is that Dhamanjaya Hegde sang as a winner of first prize in the music competition held by the Mandal. But Hemang Mehta sang as one of the guest artistes (like Pt. S.C.R. Bhatt, Pt. Yashwant Bim Joshi, Pt. Sureshbbhai Guntunde and Sri Buddhadevitya Mukherjee). Hemang Mehta has been performing for the past fifteen years or so, both across the country as well as abroad, as a brilliant representative of Mewati Gharana.

I request you to effect suitable correction in the next issue of 'Phoenix'.

Pt. D.B. Harindra

Bangalore

Karnataka artistes in Chennai Festival

Sir,

May I refer to the above article in Dec. 1998-Jan. 1999 issue. The author has left out another artiste from Karnataka who had featured in a lecture demonstration at the Music Academy.

Smt. Madhavi Rajagopalan, an AIR artiste of Bangalore since 1987 was called upon to give a lecture demonstration on "Contribution to Carnatic Music by Composers of the 18th Century - Vasudheva Kavi". She gave the demonstration on the works of Vasudheva Kavi on December 17th, 1998, between 9.00 A.M. and 9.40 A.M. just prior to the concert of another vocalist, Sitalakshmi Venkatesan, also of Karnataka.

Madhavi Rajagopalan was also awarded a Certificate and cash for the best talk and demonstration.

The above facts may kindly be brought out as an addition to the information provided.

(Air Vice-Marshal) P.S. Rajagopalan

Bangalore

Continued from Page-13

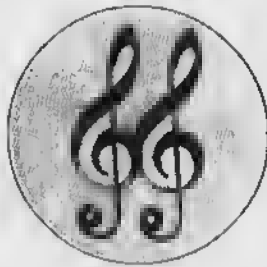
Nine-year old Shimoga prodigy Anjana P. Ran surprised the packed audience with her confident rendering of Vasantha Varna, Hamsadhvani and Hindolam pieces.

The Valedictory was a simple affair when volunteers

and men and women who tailed for Raga Dhana for 10 years were felicitated by Vidwan Madhavi P. Balasubrahmanyam. Prof. V. Aravinda Hebbar, Secretary, presented a report. Smt. Prathibha Samaga proposed a vote of thanks.

The concluding concert was by Manakkal S.

Rangarajan of Chennai. Endowed with rich metallic voice even at his 70s, he rendered effortlessly ragas such as Hemavati (Sri Kuntunati), Devagandhari (Ksheera sagara) and Shankarabharana (Saroja dhanetri). The superfast passages of swara renderings in different speeds enthralled the audience. □



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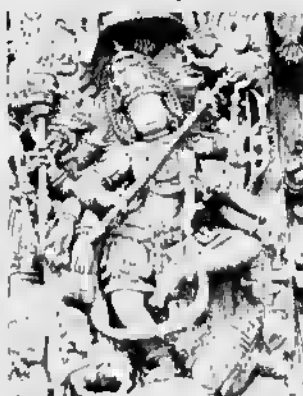
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